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PADLOCKS & GRDLES

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OF CHASTITY

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# I N T R O D U C T I O N

**Y**ou may see, if you will, the origin of padlocks of chastity in that peculiar knot, called the Herculean knot, which used to fasten the woolen sash of the Grecian maiden, and which the husband alone was to unite on his

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wedding night. Solidify this knot, apply it to iron bars, and you have almost the padlock. But the Greeks do not appear to have been acquainted with this safety-apparatus. It is only in Voltaire's story that we see Prosperpine defended by an armour of this kind. Vulcan, the able artisan, never succeeded but in forging the famous net which enabled him to catch people in the very act, though not to prevent them. And when Ulysses used to fasten the door of his royal house with a peg driven into straps, he would have doubtless been at a great loss to put a lock on Penelope.

The girdle of virginity, worn by the Grecian maidens, used to be put on at the nubile age and taken off after marriage; quite on the contrary, the girdle of chastity was presented by the husband to the wife in the morning of his wedding-night, as a most suitable means of maintaining union and good understanding between them, by dispelling all his jealous fears. We see in the pseudo-Meursius's *Aloysia*, that elegant picture of the morals of the 16th century, with what arguments a husband, who has good grounds for being on his guard, persuades his wife to put one on; it is herself,

Tullia, who relates the incident to her friend Ottavia: "Truly," said he, "I am fully persuaded that thou art exceedingly honest and chaste; yet I fear for thy virtue unless we both come to its aid."—"What act, what fault have I committed to put such an idea into thy head, my heart?" I asked; "what opinion hast thou formed of me? Withal, I do not wish to depreciate any scheme thou mayst have fostered." — "I want," said he, "to put a girdle of chastity on thee; if thou art chaste, thou wilt not be annoyed at it; why, if not, it is thy business to see how right I am in doing what I propose." — "I will put on me whatever thou choosest," I replied; "be it what it may, I shall gladly wear it, as I was born to be thine: I shall heartily be a wife for only thee and live isolated from the rest of men, whom I despise and detest. I shall neither speak to Lampridio nor look at him." — "Don't act thus," said he; "on the contrary, I wish thee to act friendly and decently with him, so that neither he nor I may have any reason to complain of thee: he, in case thou didst treat him too rudely, and I, shouldst thou make too free with him. But the girdle of chastity will permit thee to live at greater

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liberty with him, whilst offering me full security on the side of Lampridio." Then with a silk ribbon which he placed round my body above the hips, he measured the size the girdle should be round the thick part of my body; with another ribbon, he took the measure of the space from my groins to my hips. This done: "Even in this matter," said he, "I shall try and let thee see how greatly I esteem thee. The little chains, which are to be overlaid with velveting, will be of gold; the portcullis will be of gold, the gold opening will be studded over with precious stones. The most famous goldsmith of our town will, as he is under great obligations to me, set to work at it that it may be a master-piece of his art. I shall be but conferring an honor upon thee, while seeming to be doing thee wrong."<sup>1)</sup>

1) Nicolas Chorier's *Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*: English edition, Paris Liseux, 1890, Dialogue V, p. 100.



Monsieur de Laborde<sup>2)</sup> seems, however, to be of opinion that the specimens now extant of those tools are devoid of authenticity. "Forced interpretation," says he, "have given a tale a sort of legal existence,

2) *Notice de émaux du Louvre*, tome II, *Glossaire*; art. *Ceinture de chasteté*.

and several to recommend curious collections belonging to amateurs' museums. These girdles have not existed as the current fashion, especially in so sprightly a nation as ours; they may have been exceptionally invented, as the whim of some maniac. I reject them, therefore, and advise amateurs to do so likewise." Nobody pretends that such a practice has existed among any European people as a general custom, or current fashion; but the husbands and jealous lovers, who have thought proper to compel their wives or mistresses to put on girdles of chastity in Spain, Italy and even in France, were perhaps more numerous than people imagine. Whatever Molière may have said on this matter, those bolts and gratings are really very efficacious obstacles; their efficacy would be much greater still if this lockwork were applied not only to the doors and windows, but also to the woman's own person, making her thus invulnerable by art. Woman's body is like the larder of man's pleasures, in a selfish point of view; what can be more natural than to padlock the larder, for fear some intruder should come and fall upon the best morsels and eat up the dainties?



The frailty of woman is so well known, ever since Eve and her adventure with the Serpent, that man, in all times and countries, has been trying in every way and sometimes in very cruel ways, to remedy it, without ever believing he is completely safe. In

regions where the passions are as burning as the climate, infibulation is one of the measures to which people had recourse in olden times, in order to secure the fidelity of the women and the virginity of the girls. Strabo speaks of it as of a custom pretty common among the Ethiopians. De Pauw<sup>1)</sup> distinguishes three sorts of them; but the learned Dutchman obviously miscalls very different processes by the same name; the buckle or fibule is not used in two of these. "As soon as a girl is born in Ethiopia," says he, "the lips of her privy parts are united and sewed together with a silk string, and there is left in them only the bare opening that the natural gush requires. You may imagine what pain a stitching made in so sensible a spot must cause the victims of such a monstrous operation. The flesh of both sides, thus united by art, at length adheres naturally; and towards the second year, there remains no more but an ugly seam. The father of a child like this is convinced he has a virgin; and he sells her for a virgin to him that bids most, as they do throughout the East. The closed-up parts

<sup>1)</sup> *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains*, tome II, p. 140 (Berlin, 1779, 3 vols. 12mo).

are opened again, some time before the girl's marriage, by an incision deep enough to be able to undo the consolidation formed by the sewing.

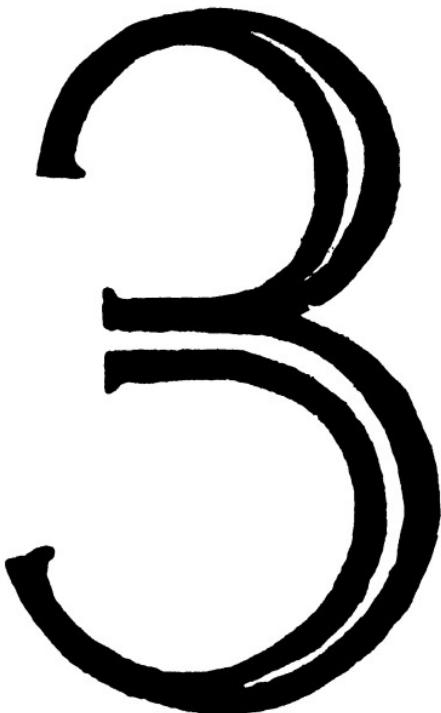
"As this manner of infibulating is the most frightful and cruel, it is likewise the least in use. In some other tribes of Asia and Africa, they run a ring through the tips of the opposite nymphs; and this ring is so enchased in girls, that it can be removed only by filing it, or by forcibly cutting it with scissors. We imagine that those shackles can be welded only by a soldering, so as to unite both branches of the buckle after it has been sunk into the flesh; and this soldering can be performed only with a red-hot iron, which is laid on the buckle itself, in order to melt in the ore lead. As to the women, they wear there an iron circle provided with a lock, the key of which the husband holds; for this tool supplies the place of seraglio and eunuchs, who require such expense and who cost so dear in Asia, that absolutely nobody but seignors and princes have slaves trained for guarding other slaves; villains from among the populace use those rings we have just spoken about.

"The third manner of infibulating, though not so blood-coloured as the others, is still a horrid relic of barbarity. It consists in putting a girdle of plaited brass wires on women, padlocked above the hips with a lock composed of movable rings, on which they have carved a certain number of characters or figures between which there is but one combination possible for pressing the spring of the padlock, and this combination is the husband's secret."

The first mode of infibulation, which De Pauw had better call by its right name *suture*, is still used in Egypt and among a few negro tribes. Vivant Denon relates that when the Arabs fled at the approach of the French army, in the environs of Syena, the latter found quite little girls with their privy parts sewed, in the abandoned villages. According to more recent travellers, the operation is practiced at the age of eight or nine; and it is no uncommon thing for even married women to be subjected to it. When a Nubian goes on a journey or far-distant expedition, he makes sure in this way that his wife will not suffer herself to be consoled for his absence; skillful matrons are called in to perform the operation at his

departure and the counter-operation at his return. But we are assured that conjugal fidelity is not kept any better for this; that the woman does not hesitate to get herself ripped up in order to receive her lover; 'tis but getting sewed again, however painful for her, as soon as she hears from some caravan of her husband's near return.<sup>1)</sup>

De Cadalvène, *Egypte et Nubie*, tome II, p. 158.



As to infibulation properly so called, it seems to have passed from Egypt and Asia to Rome towards the latter days of the Republic; but, strange to say, it was in order to be applied to men and not to women, and specially to young lads, singers and players.

Celsus (*Medicina*, VII, xxv, 3) has described for us this little surgical operation: the *prepuce* used to be drawn over the glands of the organ which was forced backwards, and there used to be a puncture made with a needle in the two opposite lips. At first, a thread was introduced into the puncture; both ends of it were tied and care was taken to have it slipped every day that it might not adhere. The healing over, they came and welded the fibule, which was sometimes of gold, but most frequently of silver: "*Ad transitum virilitatis custodiuntur agentes*," says *Pliny* (xxxiii, 12), when speaking of lads. These used to be infibulated at the stormy time of puberty, so as to preserve them from premature excesses, and above all from masturbation; players and singers, in order to keep their voices from becoming hoarse. As this buckle was very cumbersome, those who used to wear it would slip it with the yard into a woolen sheath (*theca*), which was also called by extension *fibule*, and which a bandage in the style of our *suspensories* used to sustain. In fact, it was a kind of girdle of chastity for the use of the stronger sex; and it sufficed to wear one to make people believe that the

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wearer was provided with the fibule. Martial tells us of the misadventure that befell Menophilus with respect to this matter:

So far was he from being unprepuced, that his prepuce stuck rivetted for good and all above the glands; but the poor fellow used to wear a huge sheath, to make people believe it was designed for dissembling the biggest of all fibules; the bandage having got loose while he was acting, the truth of the matter became manifest. Every scholar is acquainted with the numerous passages of Pliny, Seneca, Juvenal and Martial, in which there is question of the buckle of the players, the frenzy of love with which the Roman ladies would run after those infibulati, whom their forced continence, they fancied, must make indefatigable athletes in the lists of Venus; and of the great sums of money that these or their masters would extort from those ladies before they would let the fibule be broken. Women who had

So huge a fibule clad the yard of Menophilus,  
That it alone would have done all the players;  
I should have thought, as we often bathe together,  
That, being uneasy about his voice, he was caring it in  
this way:  
While he was exercising in the palestra, before the eyes  
of all,  
Lo the fibule falls of the wretch: he was circumcised!  
(VII, 81).

favourite slaves they were jealous of would get them infibulated also for the same reason; it was more decidedly they that would have required to be solidly buckled!

The third manner of infibulation described by De Pauw is no other than the girdle of chastity much the same as we know it; and, though travellers have lit upon specimens of it even to the Archipelago of Moluccas, yet their structure and combinations complicated with padlocks with letters and figures afford but little room to see in them inventions of primeval nations.

The most antique personage in Europe, of whom history, or rather legend makes mention as having put an apparatus of this kind on his wives or mistresses, is Francesco II da Carrara, the last sovereign lord of Padua, in the 14th century. Freydier, who miscalls him imperial "viguier," deems him not less improperly the inventor of it. He had taken his information from Abbé Misson who states in his *Journey to Italy* (tome I, p. 112), that he has been the bust of this tyrant in the Ducal Palace of Venice. "This tyrant," he adds, "who was so remarkable for his cruelties, and who was strangled with his

four children and his brother by order of the Senate of Venice. They further show a little dressing-chest containing six *robinets* set with springs fitted in such a way, that, on opening the chest these little cannons went off and killed a lady, Countess Sacrati, to whom Carrara had sent it as a present. They show besides small pocket cross-bows and steel arrows with which he used to delight in killing those he met, before they were rightly aware of the blow, or of him that gave it. *Ibi etiam sunt seroe et varia repagula quibus turpe illud monstrum pellices suas occludebat.*"<sup>1)</sup> After Freydier, Dulaure has somewhat embellished this passage. He asserts what Misson does not say, but merely hints, namely, that Francesco da Carrara's acts of cruelty brought him to the scaffold: that one of the charges taken up against him was, that he put padlocks and girdles of chastity on all the women in his seraglio; that a chestful of these tools was preserved long after they had served as so many convincing proofs at the monster's trial. A desire of getting

<sup>1)</sup> "There, too, are padlocks and several kinds of safety-tools with which the fool monster was wont to secure his concubines."

some particulars about so singular a trial and so accomplished a mediæval tyrant very naturally led us to make inquiries; and great has been our disappointment, indeed, not to find any, or to find such facts as are in complete contradiction with the assertions of Misson, Freydier and Dulaure. The Italian chronicles collected by Muratori speak nearly all of them at great length of Francesco II da Carrara; for he acted a notable part towards the close of the 14th century; and he was really strangled in his prison at Venice, but only as a political enemy, because he seized upon Verona and a few Lombard towns, at the death of Galeaz Visconti. The Venetians retook Verona from him, then blocked him up so closely in Padua, that famine compelled him to capitulate. They proposed to give him sixty thousand gold ducats and let him quit the town with his whole household and as much of his furniture and goods as he could convey in one day, on condition, however, that he should leave the seigniory of Padua to Venice and live afar like a quiet private gentleman. Carrara consented at first, then altered his mind, saying he wished to die Lord of Padua; he made a last effort and was

obliged to surrender at discretion. The Council of Ten, after holding him a few months in custody, had him strangled with two of his sons, prisoners like himself, for the peremptory motive, "that a dead body wages war no more"; these are the very words of one of the judges; and a rumor was spread among the people that he died of a catarrh. His trial and execution are described with full particulars by Andrea Navagero<sup>1)</sup> Sanuto<sup>2)</sup>, by the author of "Chronicon Tarvisianum" and especially by Andrea Gattaro<sup>3)</sup>; there is not a blessed word about his seraglio, his padlocked women, the strange chest that killed Countess Sacrati or his pocket cross-bows. The historian of Padua gives on the contrary the following description of the monster: "The said Seignior Francesco de arrara was a stout well-shaped middle-sized man of dark complexion, rather haughty in his look, discreet in his conversation, gracious and gentle with his people, merciful to all, very skilled in sciences and fearless for himself." He does not look much like a man who kills people

1) *Storia della Repubblica Venezia.*

2) *Vite dé Duchi di Venezia.*

3) *Istorio Padovana.*

for fun. Abbé Misson must have lent too complaisant an ear to the stories of some sophistical cicerone. There, then, remain only those padlocks and boltworks which he must have seen and the existence of which appears to be certain, whether they come from Francesco da Carrara or somebody else. When President de Brosses visited the small arsenal of the Palace of the Doges, less than a century after this traveller, those tools were reduced to only one, and the tyrant's seraglio, decreased in the same proportion, was composed of not more than one woman, his lawful spouse. "It is likewise there," says the witty President, "that there is a celebrated padlock which once a certain tyrant of Padua used for securing his wife's honor. This woman must have had a great deal of honor, as the lock is extremely large<sup>1)</sup>!" That is how legends vanish, when we look a little closely into them.

As President de Brosses did not think proper to describe this padlock for us, and as Abbé Misson's modesty kept him from saying any thing but a few words in Latin about the ones he had seen, we can only

1) *Lettres familières*, XVIe.

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surmise what they were like. Fortunately, we know the diverse systems employed in the framing of those ingenious apparatuses, both from precise descriptions, and the specimens now extant in public collections. The simplest is that of one of the girdles of chastity preserved in the Musée de Cluny, Paris (fig. 1). The occlusion is formed by an ivory beak fastened with a lock to a steel hoop provided with a rack. The ivory beak, whose curve follows that of the pubis and nicely fits into it, is furrowed with a longitudinal cleft for the passage of natural secretions. The rack permits the hoop to be fitted to the waist; the hoop is overlaid with velvet, so as not to wound the hips, and it is held at the required notch by a turn of the key. A tradition, unjustified by facts, affirms that this girdle is the one which Henry II put on Catharine de Medicis; its smallness would never permit one to fit it on a woman with so rich an embonpoint as the queen, to whom a soldier gave the answer related by Brantôme. She asked why had the Huguenots christened a huge culverin after her: "Madam," said the soldier, "it is because its caliber is larger and stouter than all the rest."

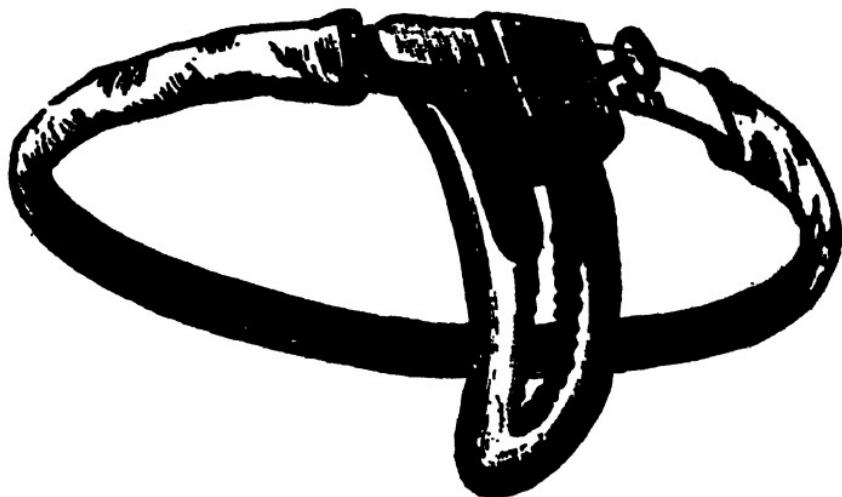
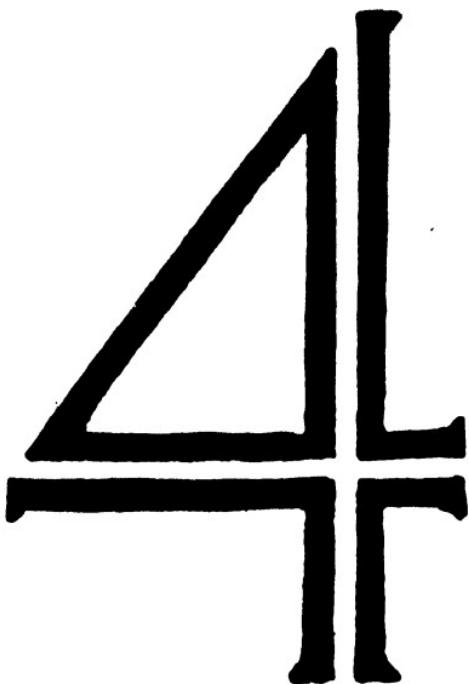


FIG. I

Henry II was the first to use this peculiar instrument of torture. He had it devised for Catherine de Medicis as a little token of his love for her. That it acted as a preventative was probably a mere coincidence. Later he discovered that there were upwards of three hundred keys in current usage. Hence the saying; "Love Laughs at Locksmiths."





Nicolas Chorier, in the work above quoted, describes a girdle of chastity resting on a different combination over the pubis by four chais, two of which, welded to the top of the grating, are fastened to the girdle before; two more are fastened behind on pass-

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ing under the thighs. Our readers will be thankful to us for giving here the passage which contains a full description of it:

*Ottavia.* I heard my mother saying something or other to Giulia a few days ago about a girdle of chastity. But I do not know how this girdle can make women chaste.

*Tullia.* Thou wilt learn it. Next day, when Giulia was getting up, Giocondo drew nigh. Once the witnesses were out of sight, he displayed the famous belt. She on laughing: — “What is the meaning of this thing thou hast there, whereon I see shining gold?” she inquired. — “Thou wilt please put on this girdle of chastity, this very instant,” he replied, “in order to preserve thee from the maternal blemish. They call this thing a girdle of chastity; my mistress, Sempronia, wore it several years before thee; it is now thy turn to clap it on. Owing to it she won her high reputation; I hope thou wilt acquire as good a one.” The gold portcullis was suspended by four little iron-chains overlaid with velvetings and rivetted with similar art into a belt of metal to match. Two of the chains on one side and two on the other held up the girdle by being passed through it behind and before. The

girdle was fastened behind above the hips by means of a lock adapted to a very small key. The portcullis, being about six inches high by three in width, thus ran from the perineum to the edge of the outer lips; it covered the whole space which extends between the two thighs and the bottom of the uterus. As it is formed of three open bars, the urine finds an outlet, whilst it refuses an entrance even to the tops of one's fingers. Thus that part is protected as it were by a cuirass against foreign mentules; only he to whom the law of Hymen allotted has an easy access to it whenever he chooses.

*Ottava.* What must the bride have said to herself?

*Tullia.* What thou thyself wilt say in a few days, because they are also preparing a similar kind of apparatus for thee.

*Ottavia.* I was not aware of what Caviceo was up to when he said, concerning the girdle of chastity, that it was the surest defense of honest women's virtue, and when he asked me whether I would be willing to put on one as my mother would advise me.

*Tullia.* "What must I do?" asked Giulia, whilst her husband was throwing aside the bedclothes.—"Put," said he, "one foot into

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these two chains and the other into those." Both feet being in, he pulled up the girdle, placed the portcullis before the slit, bound the pit of her stomach, a little above the hips, with the girdle and locked it. "Now," said he, "thy pudency is secured; it is all right, but wilt thou think hard of wearing it?" — "Certainly not," she replied. Thereupon, he bid her rise naked, get out of bed and walk about. She rose as she had been ordered, jumped out of bed, and advanced a few steps; she said she could not walk so readily as before, being obliged to spread out her legs owing to the huge size of the portcullis. — "Never mind," said he, "thou wilt become accustomed to it; I do not wonder at thy not feeling at ease, this being new to thee."



But no: all was not yet safe, no more with this system than with the previous one. The grating of gold, like the beak of ivory, protected only the chastity of the fore part, while leaving the other wholly undefended. A Frenchman might put up with it; we are

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therefore inclined to believe these tools are of French manufacture; but an Italian of the 16th century (let us spare our contemporaries) would have never thought his wife entirely safe with so incomplete an apparatus. The jealous husbands of that time were too suspicious, too well up to the habits of their countrymen, to secure but one side.

The second girdle preserved in the Musée de Cluny answers much better the double object that the Italians were to propose to themselves, and it is exceedingly worthy of note: excellent as a preservative, it is at the same time an object of art. It is composed (fig. 3) of two plates of forged iron, engraved, damaskeened and pinked with gold, united at the bottom by a joint, and at the top by a girdle of wrought iron. There are holes made all around the edges of the plates and girdle for linings to be sewed on. The front plate, which the position of the object in the glass-case scarce allows one to see, has a notched aperture of an elongated form at its lower end; the aperture in the back plate is in the shape of a trefoil. Both are decorated with masks and arabesques; but the figures of Adam and

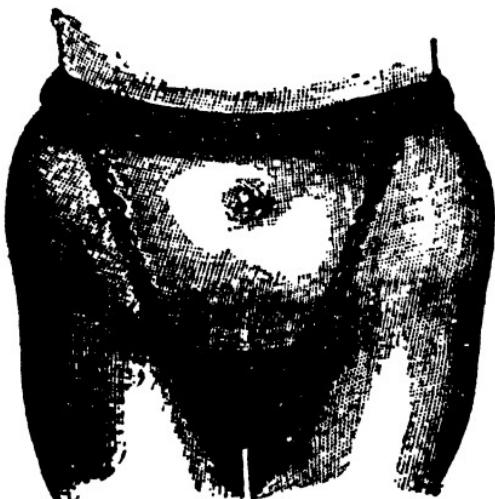


FIG. II

The daintiness of the girdle pictured above was motivated by the asceticism of the first Crusaders. When they departed for the Holy Land, they entrusted the keeping of the keys to an ancient, feeble man. By some strange turn of fate, the old ne'er-do-well suddenly amassed great wealth, and the warriors returned to find their wives looking much better than they should have been.



Eve are further engraven on the fore part: on this head, we can refer the matter only to the Catalogue. Figure 4 represents the padlock placed behind at the side, and figure 5 gives an idea of this girdle applied to a woman with a back view: it is a cuirass, proof against the best tempered weapons, and defying on each side alike the most daring attempts. This is a thorough Italian contrivance; and so it really is from Italy that Meremée brought it, in order to present it to the Musée de Cluny.

The author of the article “Ceinture de Chasteté”, in the *Encyclopédie*, describes another with as nice a fastening, but of quite a primitive construction. “The girdle,” he says, “is composed of two thin and very pliant plates of iron set together crosswise; these plates are covered with velvet. One goes round the body, above the loins; the other runs in between the thighs, and its end comes to meet both ends of the first plate; the whole three are joined with a padlock of which the husband alone knows the secret spring. The plate that runs in between the thighs is bored so as to make a husband easy about his wife’s good be-

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haviour, nor does it derange the other natural functions."

Must the girdle, of which Freydier speaks in his speech in behalf of Mdlle. Lajon, be placed among the specimens of this kind? It was not, at all events, an object of goldsmith's art to be compared with the one we have described above. Freydier defines it "drawers hemmed and net-worked with several brass-wires united by needle-work," for the preservation of which there were numerous stamps of sealing-wax on the watch. It must not be of an exemplary solidity, despite of the lock that commanded the whole system; Sieur Berlhe, the tyrant of Padua of Miss Lajon, must have made it himself of the remains of some old coat of mail. It would be an object of only greater curiosity for this, had they preserved it in the Museum of Nimes, as the production of a free natural art, owing nothing to the imitation of masters.

Every one is agreed, at least among us, to credit Italy with the invention and more or less common use of the girdle of chastity. Diderot calls it the Florentine tool. Voltaire believes that it is in general use at Rome and Venice. Saint-Amand also says that, in

his time, most Roman ladies used to wear drawers or trowsers of iron:

With a trowse that Crazy-Body  
With his own hands forged  
Their wives' bottom is clogged,  
Lest it should play the fool.  
*(Rome ridicule).*





Rabelais<sup>1)</sup> puts into the mouth of Panurge the following words: "The deuce, he that has no white in his eye, take me then with him, if I don't buckle my wife in the Bergamask fashion, when I go out from my seraglio!" This expression would lead one to believe

1) *Pantagruel*, book III, ch. xxvi.

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that the Bergamasks used those kinds of fence still more commonly than all other Italians; or that the locksmiths of Gergamo had acquired the same degree of superiority for this style of manufacture, as the sword-cutlers of Toledo for the tempering of fine swords. We read in the *Memoirs* of Count de Bonneval, the celebrated adventurer, of his amours with a lady of Como, who chanced to have on one of these girdles. There was no means of cutting or ripping it open without it being discovered, and her life was depending upon it. Bonneval killed the husband in a duel and was obliged to fly to Vienna, where, the story having leaked out, ladies of the high aristocracy and the Emperor Francis-Joseph put a thousand questions to him about this curious tool, unknown in Austria. But these *Memoirs* are apocryphal. It is a pretty strange particular: the more information we find in French authors about Italian girdles of chastity, the more silent are the Italians themselves on this head. Nobody, to our knowledge, points out any allusion made to them in their romancers of the 15th and 16th centuries, so fertile withal in love stories, conjugal misadventures, and ven-

geances of jealous husbands. Let whoever will explain this anomaly.

Be that as it may, the fashion was very near being introduced among us in the reign of Henry II. "In the time of King Henry," says Brantôme, "there was a certain pedlar that brought to the fair of Saint-Germain a dozen of certain tools for bridling women's affairs. They were made of iron and went round the waist like a girdle and branched down to be caught at the bottom and locked. They were framed with so much art, that it was not possible for the woman, once she was bridled with one, ever to be able to avail herself of it for sweet pleasure, having but a few small holes to serve for making her water."

"They say there were some five or six peevish jealous husbands, who bought some of them and bridled their wives with them in so safe a way that they might well say: Farewell merry time! And so there was one of these women who took it into her head to keep company with a locksmith, who was very subtle in his art, and to whom she showed the said apparatus and her own and every thing. The husband being gone out to the fields, the locksmith bent his mind

so closely on the affair, that he forged a false key for it; the lady had the pleasure of fastening and opening it at all hours, and when she wished. The husband never found any thing amiss with it; so she took her fill of this fine pleasure, in spite of the jealous foppish cuckold husband, who fancied he would always live secure from cockoldom. But the roguish locksmith, who made the false key, spoiled all on him, and, according to what they say, did still better; he was the first to enjoy her and thus made a cuckold of him. They say, moreover, that there were at Court many honest gallant gentlemen, who gave the pedlar to understand in severe terms, that if ever he attempted to carry like trumperies, they would kill him; that he should not go there again; that he should throw all the others which still remained into the privy, which he did. And he was never talked of since, which was very wise of him, as it was enough to have half the world lost, for want of peopling it, by binding nature with such bridles, locks and clasps, the abominable and hateful enemies of the multiplication of mankind.”<sup>1)</sup>

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1) *Vie des Dames galantes*; Discourse I.

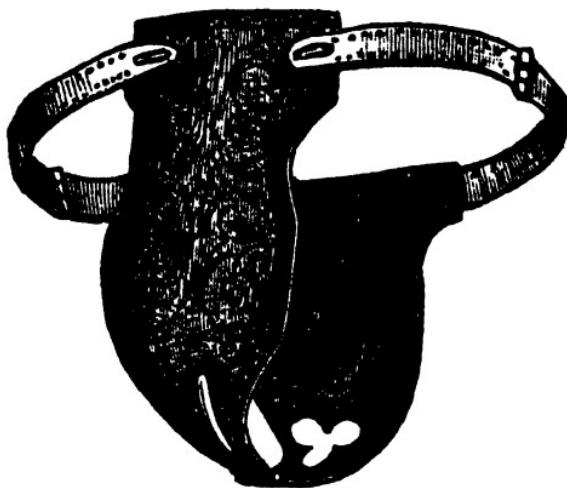
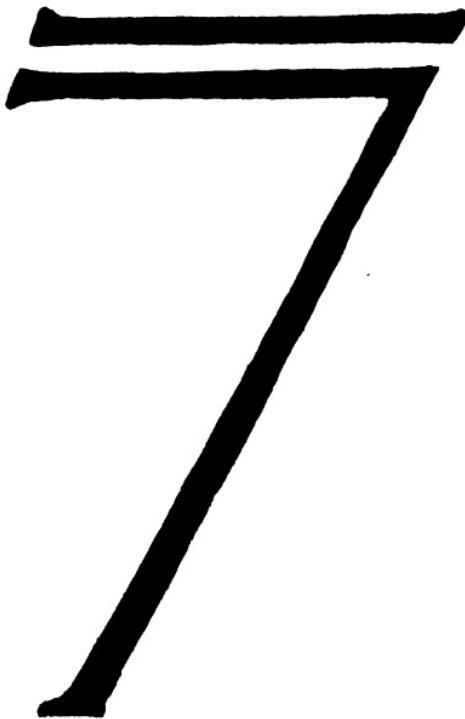


FIG. III

With this figure, things grow rather more complicated. An ideal protection against cold weather, truly, but there are other methods of gaining warmth. What has puzzled many students is the design engraved thereupon. The sages have answered that, like other inventions of the devil, it is to lure men to their destruction. After looking at the illustration again, we cannot doubt the truth of that remark.





The introduction and use of those tools in France would go a great deal farther back than the reign of Henry II, were we to take in their literal sense certain pretty obscure words of writers of the 15th century. Guillaume de Machault, for example, speaking

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of one of his mistresses, says:

Then the fair lady hugged me . . . ,  
So she reached a little key  
Of gold, made by a master-hand,  
And said: "This key carry,  
Friend, and keep it safe,  
For it is the key to my treasure.  
I make you lord of it henceforth,  
And above all you shall be master of it,  
And therefore I love it more than my right eye:  
For it is my honor, it is my wealth,  
It is what I can be generous with . . ."

Agnès of Navarre wrote to Guillaume de Machault: "Please not to lose the key of the box I have, for if it were lost, I think I should never have perfect joy. For, by God! it shall never be unlocked by any other key but the one you have and it shall be so when you please." Guillaume replied to Agnès: ". . . As to the key I carry of the very rich

and gracious treasure, which is in the box, in which all joy, all grace, all sweetness are, doubt not that it shall be very well kept, if God is pleased and I am able. And I shall bring it to you as soon as I can, in order to behold the graces, the glories and the riches of that loving treasure.” Commentators have quite simply thought that Agnès of Navarre wore a girdle of chastity of her own accord, in order to warrant her lover of her constancy, and gave the key of it to Guillaume de Machault. Monsieur de La-borde<sup>1)</sup> denies that these passages ought to be interpreted in this manner, and that it would be giving them quite a different sense to what was in the writers’ minds; perhaps he is right. In the last episode of the *Aloysia*, of which we have given the translation, Giocondo, after putting the girdle on his wife, at the instigation of Sempronnia, his mistress, returned to the latter with all speed: “And now, mistress,” he cried, “I have two keys to offer thee, but this one first” (he showed his *mentule*), “for I can no longer bear it!” And if Guillaume de Machault and Agnès de Navarre

<sup>1)</sup> *Notice des émaux du Louvre*, tome II, *Glossaire*; art. *TréSOR*.

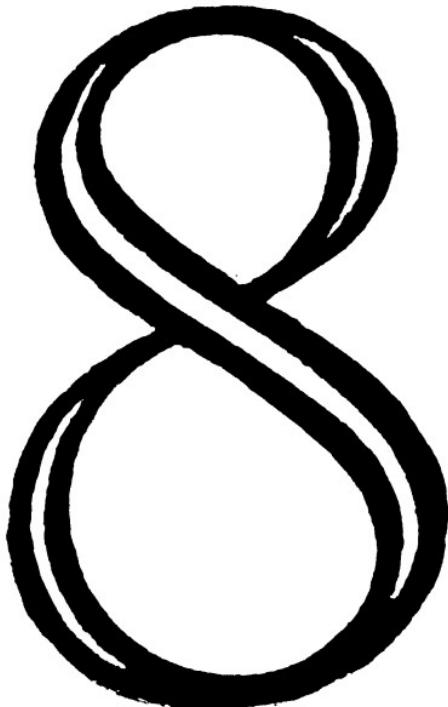
did not speak of one of these two keys, did they mean then to speak of the other? Fortunately for Count de Foix, husband of the fair Agnès, we can still interpret these passages in quite an allegorical and immaterial sense, sufficiently conformable to the refined symbolism of Cupid's faithful.



FIG. IV

And here is a close-up of the lock. Ambitious lovers were known to have spent months unraveling its complexities without notable success. The mediaeval husbands used to meet in taverns for the purpose of gloating. The only satisfied lovers were those of the plumbers' wives, whose mates were in the habit of forgetting their keys.





From the close of the 16th century to the middle of the 18th, indications about girdles of chastity, though not very numerous, give all the same to understand that the pedlar of Brantome did not cast all his wares into the privy. Monsieur Niel, in his *Portraits du*

*XVIe siecle*, names a satirical picture from which we may conclude that Henry IV was suspected of taking this kind of precaution with one of his mistresses. It bears this title: *Du coqu qui porte la clef et sa femme la serrure*,<sup>1)</sup> and represents a naked woman seated on a bed; we recognize in her the features of the Marhcioness de Verneuil. She has a girdle round her body with a pad-lock, the key of which she is handing to the Bearnese; behind the bed-curtains, the chambermaid presents a second key to a gallant gentleman, who pulls out his purse to pay her.

Tallemant des Réaux, in his three hundred and forty-fifth short story, tells us the following anecdote: "The first president Le Jay was once solicited by a pretty lady, who pretended that her husband was so jealous that, when going away, he had put iron drawers on her. This inflamed the president: the drawers were not so tight that they could not be drawn back; but the good man caught a milchcow with her. It was a trick they were playing on him." In the language of Tallemant des Réaux, a milch-cow sig-

<sup>1)</sup> Of the cuckold who carries the key and his wife the lock.



FIG. V

This shows the rear view of a girdle used by the second Crusaders. They were not quite so trusting as those who went before. When they left their homes they gave their keys to another old man. Some of the fighters, with visions of oriental beauties in their minds, told the old man to throw the keys away. Others, lean and restless instructed him to exchange their keys for *different* keys, in the hope of finding more delectable entrances upon their return.



nifies, by a pretty smutty metaphor, a venereal running; that girdle was then a very scurvy jest. The one which they assert that Duc de Centadour bestowed on his wife was of the same suspected nature; we are therefore somewhat surprised to see the following lines<sup>1)</sup> under the signature of M. Gustave Brunet: "All persons knowing any thing about the intimate history of the Court of Louis XIV are aware that the Duc de Ventadour, a very ugly deformed man, married Mdlle de la Motte-Houdancourt, who was much talked about for her beauty and intrigues. Madame de Sévigné relates the sly saying of Madame Cornuel about the report that spread concerning the measure taken by the duke to baffle the projects of his spouse's adorers: He has put a good porter at the door!" The erudite bibliographer believes that this porter was of iron and came from the ironmonger's. Not in the least, and you will be convinced of it when you read Madame de Sévigné's sentence to the end: "Madame Cornuel says that the Duc de Ventradour has put a good porter at his door . . ." by giving his poor wife a fine dis-

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1) *Revue archéologique*, vol. X, 1853.

ease." He had, then, made the unfortunate duchess the same kind of present as the solicitress made the good man Le Jay; this, still less than the anecdote of Tallemant, has no connection with girdles of chastity.

When Voltaire was a young man, he had an opportunity of seeing and fingering one, which was quite authentic and solidly bolted round the body of one of his first mistresses, whom he designated by the still mysterious name of Madam de B....; it is what won the nice tale of the *Padlock* for us. The author, says a note in the Kehl edition, was about twenty years old when he composed this piece of poetry, addressed in 1716 to a lady against whom her husband had taken this strange precaution; it was printed for the first time in 1724.

Girdles of chastity were not, then, of such rare use as we might be tempted to believe at first sight, and we find another proof of it in the speech of Freydier, lawyer at Nimes, in behalf of an unfortunate girl whom her lover compelled to encumber herself with this portable prison, whenever he went on a journey. This speech is previous to 1750, in which year it was printed for the first time. In order to be well acquainted with

the matter, we would want the rest of the brief, the speech of the adverse party and especially the judgment, the clauses of which could not fail to be of curiosity; but the harangue of the Nimese lawyer has alone been saved from oblivion. A Nicolas Chravier would have perhaps turned this smutty cause to a better account; still, this performance, such as it is, deserves to be appreciated by connoisseurs. At all events, it is the last positive document we have on this matter; it closes the series of information that can be gathered together concerning a custom which is very likely altogether out of use to-day.



S P E E C H   O F  
M O N S I E U R  
F R E Y D I E R  
O N   B E H A L F  
O F   M A D E M O I -  
S E L L E   M A R I E  
L A J O N   V E R S U S  
S I E U R   P I E R R E  
B E R L H E   P R I S O N E R  
O F   T H E   C O U R T



THE present action has no precedent in the amorous Annals of France. prising crafty lovers ruin simple Hitherto we may have seen enter- young girls, and then add perjury to seduc- tion, ingratitude to outrage. We may have also seen weak credulous females, who, after sacrificing their honor to the flattering hopes of a suitable match, found them-

selves betrayed and driven at last to wear out the remainder of their days in shame and wretchedness. But, Gentlemen, I may tell you in the present cause you will find pieces of singularity, that heighten and place it beyond the domain of ordinary rules.

On one hand, we see a raw young girl, seduced by the artifices of a base ravisher and the hope of a speedy settlement; we see her carried away from the midst of her kindred; taken by her lover to several places; disguised as a man by the very fellow whose slave she has become.

On the other hand, we see a man of an age when human passions rule with sway. This man, after having used the most unremitting seduction to triumph over the young girl's virtue, was not satisfied with being master of her mind and heart: he was still cruel enough to bring her body also into slavery, by attaching to it a *chain-padlock*, or *girdle of chastity*; for the purpose, no doubt, of gradually introducing among the French a barbarous custom, which rank jealousy had until then suggested only to the Italians and Spaniards.

Such are the various traits that go to

characterize the guilt of Sieur Berlhe. Were there ever any more deserving of punishment in this matter?

I shall give you now, Gentlemen, the abridged plain history of Mdlle Lajon's misfortunes; and, though she speaks here only through my ministry, yet her modesty and heart are greatly pained at the recital. It is a sad thing for a young girl to see herself compelled to avow her frailties, and to bring to trial, he who was once the object of her attachment. It is a painful thing for her to be in the dire necessity of loading him with cruel but just reproaches, and of calling him by his name.

Yet, what did the young lady (whom I am defending) not do, in order to bring the ungrateful fellow over to his engagements? She tried for a long while with tears and sobs to remind him of his protestations; she repeated his promises to him a long time, but it was all useless to a heart given up to inconstancy and levity. She finds herself, therefore, forced to load the false fellow with confusion, and to call on him the penalties he deserves; as the only way to reclaim him, Gentlemen, is to engage all your severity against him.

Mdlle Lajon is from the town of Toulouse. She went to Montpellier some time ago to see her relations on the mother's side; thence she proceeded to Avignon to live with her brother who is settled there, and who was then lodging in the house of Sieur Berlhe. The latter had occasion to see this young girl, who is pretty liberally adorned with the gifts of nature. At first, he had a certain propensity for her, but he contrived to hide it with such courtesy as decency seemed to authorize.

Mdlle Lajon was not over susceptible of impression then. So she perceived undisturbed the apparent civilities of Sieur Berlhe. Her heart quietly at rest, she was awaiting her parents' orders. Meanwhile, the young man leisurely improved the opportunities that the circumstance of their living under the same roof afforded him. He slyly paid her his most earnest addresses, and grew distractedly fond of her. Yet, he contrived to play the counterfeit, lest Sieur Lajon, who was more clear-sighted than the sister, should discover the drift of his assiduities.

However, this kind of restraint served but to excite the desires of Sieur Berlhe. He

let no fair opportunity slip without complimenting the young girl on her charms. He would cry up her graces at one time, and at another show off to her his assiduities and wishes.

Now, a young girl of Mdlle Lajon's cast is easily persuaded. Being herself incapable of deceiving any one, she naturally supposes every body else has a similar character, because honesty attends this state of early innocence.

With Sieur Berlhe it was quite otherwise. With a mind fertile in expedients and the most proper means of deceiving, he artfully declared his love to the young lady. He called God to witness his tenderness for her. He made her promises and oaths. In a word, he tried all that is most dangerous in the fatal science of loving, and most studied in the art of seducing.

Such language was new to Mdlle Lajon; it alarmed her modesty. But Sieur Berlhe gained her over to such extent, that she did not distrust a man, who was giving his courtship the appearance of a merely lawful end. Ah, fatal credulity! Unlucky bait with which young girls let themselves almost always be caught! That was exactly

the trap set by Sieur Berhle and Cupid.

Meanwhile, Mdlle Lajon gave ear to those entreaties with a kind of security, and ascribed to them only a purely upright motive; because her early innocence bore her up still. Owing to the facility he had of seeing her at almost every moment in the day, he padded, as it were, all the roads to seduction. He feigned so much simplicity and candour, that she had no diffidence of him.

Girls are frail and unaware of danger. They expose their virtue imperceptibly. Wooers, on the contrary, are cunning. And there are critical moments when bold enough to venture every thing, they are only too sure of getting all.

Sieur Berhle, by continually repeating his oaths of Mdlle Lajon, got her to believe in the sincerity of his promises. One day above all others, unlucky day that was the source of all the young girl's misfortunes! —she can not think of it without shedding floods of tears; one day Sieur Berhle said to her: "Thou oughtst not to doubt that I love thee to madness. I swear to thee that my mouth is the faithful interpreter of my feelings. I assure thee I shall never have any spouse but thee, if thou wilt only re-

quite my love. Thou alone art the sole object of my desires. I shall be the happiest man alive, if I can gain thy affection."

Did any one ever tell his passion in more animated, more spirited or more expressive phrases? So many assurances shook the young lady's virtue at last. So many united promises, seemingly sincere though really false and artful, produced the effect that Sieur Berlhe desired. He discovered in her eyes the fatal impression his own had made in them. She felt in her turn several motions unknown to her till then. A marriage promised, and sworn a thousand times over, fully convinced her. Ah, cruel moment! A certain tremor came over her. In her uneasiness she foresaw her defeat. Yet, she still defended herself, or at least tried to do so; but her strength forsook her, and she was overcome.

That is how Sieur Berlhe availed himself of the young lady's weakness and triumphed over her virtue; and how, after adorning his victim, he sacrificed it to his inflamed desires. But, while she was still in a state that merited some little indulgence, the seducer swore the strongest oaths as fresh pledges of his tenderness and fidelity.

Mdlle Lajon having recovered, announced her pain with her tears. She groaned; but her wound was too deep for remedy. She was surprised that her strength should have forsaken her. She sought her heart and did not find it. Vain sorrows! To listen to a wooer is to risk every thing. By giving ear to him, a girl insensibly falls into the precipice he has dug under her feet. The flowers, which the seducer skillfully scatters, cover the entrance of the abyss. She finds out the danger only when she has forgotten her wisdom and lost her maidenhead.

Thus love nips in a single instant a virtue, which is the work of several years. It rifles a treasure, guarded till that moment, with all possible care, a treasure whose loss is irreparable.

Once Sieur Berlhe had executed so black an attempt, nothing could put a stop to his audacity. He saw the young girl frequently and he barefacedly took all the liberties of a husband with her. How often did he not use the rights of his first victory?

But he had not all the freedom he desired at Avignon, because he was afraid Sieur Lajon might in the end fathom his designs and observe his courting. So he won

the young girl over so far as to prevail on her to quit her brother's house, and follow him to Beaucaire and to several other towns in Province.

When a girl is once seduced, she is wholly in the power of her seducer. He alone disposes of her lot. She is no longer mistress of her feelings or actions. As she imagines that she can no longer expect any thing but from the fidelity of her ravisher, the will of the latter becomes her supreme law; so that we ought to look upon him as the author of all the ravished girl's frailties.

Sieur Berlhe disguised Mdlle Lajon first as a young man; then he made her cast off this transformation only to shut her up two months and a half in a room at Beaucaire. There he was plunged with her in that kind of intoxication into which the poison of pleasure is wont to cast the senses. There he quietly enjoyed his crimes and mistress.

He next conducted her in the same disguise to Montpellier, to Saint-Gilles, to several other towns, and finally to Nimes.

In the latter town Miss Lajon found out she was with child. She informed her lover of it. She urged him not to put off their settlement any longer. But he sought va-

rious pretexts to elude the fulfilling of his promises: now his business obliged him to postpone it; now it was a journey. He did indeed go on a journey; but on the eve of his departure he compelled his mistress to let a *girdle* with a *padlock* be put on her. We shall describe this hereafter.

What used Mdlle Lajon to oppose those delays? Sieur Berlhe knows very well. She opposed to them with tears and sorrow, sorrow for having given herself up to a cruel perjured man.

He came for her some time after, and brought her back to Beaucaire, where he confined her a second time in the same room, which had already served for his pleasures. In short, he took her again to Nimes, where she was delivered of a daughter. She had no sooner given birth to the child, than he clapped the *girdle* on her again; she wears it still.

Sieur Berlhe was present at his mistress's confinement. The witnesses give evidence to *having found him by her bedside at the time of her delivery*. But little by little he began to loathe his love. His mistress's charms had no longer any attraction for

him. Such is the fatal effect of a gratified passion.

Meanwhile, Mlle Lapon employed with him such means as she thought most proper to bring him over to his duty. The rascal then told her plainly, as it is shown by the inquiry, that *he was not free to marry her*; that *in order to do so it was necessary to wait till the death of his mother, who would not give her consent to this marriage*.

Mdle Lajon rightly regarded this delay as a fair evasion, or rather an odious pretence of infidelity. She felt in that instant the whole weight of her misfortune. She saw she was fooled by that low seducer. But she needed only her own grief to open her eyes; she lodged a complaint against him; upon this complaint a warrant was issued against him, and an inquiry was made.

Then Sieur Berlhe promised anew to marry her, for the purpose, no doubt, of putting a stop to the suit. He demanded only his father's procuration. When it was sent, they treated about the dowry. But here was a fresh pretence: the mother of Sieur Berlhe did not think the portion considerable enough. Driven to extremity by those affected delays, the young lady has resumed

her proceedings and asks for sentence against Sieur Berlhe to undergo penalties and pay damages.

Gentlemen, such is the state of the case.

The ravisher against whom we are proceeding is a corrupter who joins guile to unfeelingness. He does not love, or more properly speaking, he has never truly loved her. All the promises he has been reminded of were but the offsprings of a brutal passion. They all ceased with it; they all vanished with the honor of her who was their object. Thus loathing always attended gratified passion; favors in this matter serve only to make villains.

Sieur Berlhe does not, therefore, trouble his head about Miss Lajon's condition or cries; for most men of the present day glory in not being chaste. They pique themselves on robbing women of their honor. They flatter them merely to ruin them; they approach them but to betray them: and then they call gallantry what the law calls a *great crime*. They regard as a lucky feat what Justinian regards as the *snares of a very wicked man*. They treat as trifling matter what the Church treats as *damnable lewdness*. So that if they have any shame, it is

of being shamed, and not let all their honor consist in dishonoring a young girl.

Quite right, Gentlemen, that you should not give ear to those girls who have lost all reserve; who impudently appear before men as if to request their defeat, who seek it by their looks, and who go to meet seduction.

But does not a young girl like Miss Lajon, who has been seduced, deceived and dishonored, deserve that Magistrates should interest themselves in her behalf; that they should avenge her for such an act of perfidy; and that they should oblige the base inconstant ravisher to marry her?

A similar crime, perpetrated on the person of Dinah<sup>1)</sup>, caused the spreading of disorder, bloodshed and carnage over a whole Province. But if the outbreak of punishment can not be so great in our days, is it less necessary to impose on the culprit the pain he deserves? Was not what Mdlle Lajon lost through the seduction of Sieur Berlhe as dear to her, as what the daughter of Jacob once lost through the violence of Sichem?

1) *Gen. ch. 36.*

It is, then, but just to avenge her. Sieur Berlhe, in contempt of his oaths, refuses to keep his promises and do justice to her innocence and virtue. He ought to meet with such rigour in a judgment for proportionate damages, as will compel him to do so out of lucky necessity.

But as we must always proportion vengeance to crime, it is proper, Gentlemen, to examine here:

1st. The characteristics of seduction;  
2nd. The circumstances of the one which Sieur Berlhe used in order to overcome Mdlle Lajon. This examination will determine the indemnity she expects.

Seduction in general is an action through which one draws ignorant or unlightened innocent persons by the most plausible and bland allurements into the ways of error and crime. It is a piece of address on the side of the seducer to lead those to his ends, whom he purposed leading to them; and too excited an inclination on the side of the seduced for an object that attracts them by outward appearances.

The seducer's chief aim, in point of love, is to gratify his passion and vainly by satisfying a secret and dainty longing he has to

possess what he likes. Let us now trace the means of seduction, or rather the conditions that characterize it, and let us at the same time apply them to the case.

The first condition necessary for seduction is, that the person seduced or ravished be a minor and younger than the seducer. Now, in the present case, Sieur Berlhe is twenty-six years old, according to his interrogatory, whilst the girl seduced is not yet eighteen, according to the indictment.

The customs of the world give men a superiority above girls. Thus Sieur Berlhe's eight years constitute an undoubtedly superiority, especially if we observe that the girl in this instance is naturally timid, and even somewhat shy. She believes every body is honest, because she is full of candor. She is favorably prepossessed about the disposition of those that approach her, because she herself is of an excellent disposition.

The seducer is a young man who obeys but his passions. His propensity to libertinism corresponds with the corruption of his heart. He joins a rare audacity to his lewdness, but the girl, whom he attacks, is at that critical age which affords neither sufficient strength nor thought to escape

from the perils that threaten her innocence. She has not prudence enough to secure her against snares and artifices; for she judges blindly of the step taken to delude her. She does not distinguish good from evil, truth from falsehood, what is useful and honest from what is not so. Her want of experience should then save as an excuse for her weakness.

Owing, therefore, to a presumption grounded on justice, seduction is deemed as proceeding rather from the man than from the woman, as it is easy to deceive and soften her. Her heart readily yields to credulity. The Emperor Justinian, who says he is sufficiently acquainted with women's frail nature, asserts that they are apt to be easily deceived and seduced.

Indeed most of them yield rather through weakness than passion. The first woman was seduced, because she was weaker than the man, and those of her sex have ever since preserved that weakness. Hence, venturesome men usually succeed better than others, although they are not more amiable; and the most fortunate lover is often he who is most skilled in telling lies.

But if women in general deserve our in-

dulgence, how much more deserving of it is a tender unenlightened young girl, who is ignorant of the wiles that the passions suggest, as she never has had any passions? She does not know the shifts that the fatal science of loving suggests, as she has never loved. She has just come into the world, whereas the ravisher has always frequented it. In short, she knows neither fraud nor guile, whereas the seducer is the man who knows best how to practice frauds and wiles.

Therefore the laws protect young girls whose weakness and frailty are exposed to men's malice. "As it is certain," say the laws, "that those young girls are very weak and frail, and are apt to be easily deceived, and are exposed to the snares of men, it is right to lend them favourable assistance and defend them against such attempts."

"Nothing is certainly fairer," says the celebrated Cujas, "than to excuse such girls as are engaged by men's knavery in unlawful and ill-hatched conjunctions."

The second condition required for seduction is when the ravisher, to gain his point, has employed graces, designing words,

promises of marriage and all that the art of seducing is wont to use in order to debauch the reason and pervert the heart, in such a way that whatever the ravished girl has done may be less the work of her own choosing than the effect of an impression and foreign violence.

The *seduction of graces* paves the way to the others. The graces open the scene and dispose the action. They are a sort of pageant that strikes the senses and clouds the reason. They are a kind of brilliancy that flatters and seduces.

A seducer artfully sets off his good qualities. The desire of pleasing is the very soul of all his actions. He displays his fairest side under an engaging aspect. Thus love can disguise a wooer, although he be, at bottom, only a ravenous wolf seeking his prey.

Now, who would not have been deceived by the air Sieur Berlhe most ingeniously affected? He changed his temper, he disguised his defects and imperfections. He placed himself in a point of view that represented him to Miss Lajon as a good friend and guest, whereas, in reality, he sought but to betray the laws of friendship and hospitality. Yet these *graces* and first looks make

way to a young virgin's heart through her eyes, like so many poisoned arrows.

The other traits are derived from the *seduction of words*. In fact, nothing can match a seducer's eagerness, attention and civilities. He grovels in order to acquire the favors of the girl he desires. Yet he does not pursue his point at once; he goes on reducing by degrees while preparing all his springs.

An ancient<sup>1)</sup> describes the artifices of lovers in these terms: "Their words," says he, "are but entreaties, supplications and oaths. They pursue, they besiege, they become, as it were, willing slaves."

A Father of the Church<sup>2)</sup> marks the progress of seduction, thus: "The eye," says he, "looks and seduces the mind, the ear listens and gains the heart by slow degrees."

Indeed, a lover exhausts himself in oaths and protestations. He employs all the craft his passion suggests to him. He seems to place his heart on his lips, in his eyes, all over his frame. He disturbs, as it were, the whole firmament in order to bring it down to his compliments. What transformation he undergoes! What babble he uses to give idle fancy a look of reality, and folly some

appearance of wisdom! He tries to instill into the object with which he is enchanted, or with which he feigns to be so, the tenderness that he himself shams. He is lavish of the pleasing declarations common to lovers. In a word, all that art has most engaging is put into practice. And the end of all this amorous eloquence is to seduce a girl, whom he has unfortunately chosen as the object of his seduction; so that his fair discourses are equivalent to force and violence.

In this manner Sieur Berlhe dealt with regard to Mdlle Lajon. This likeness has been copied from him, nor could it be a better resemblance. How often has he not given this young girl those titles which an ardent love inspires, or which more properly seem to spring only from tenderness? How often, in those intimate frequentations, has he not vowed to her an everlasting love by all that Religion holds sacred, and that men venerate? Those awful expressions were so many perjuries in the heart and mouth of Sieur Berlhe.

But the most specious of all the means for seducing a young girl is the *promise of marriage*, when maintained by oaths pre-

ceded by frequentations and attended with good manners. This promise completes the girl's dizziness; she staggers; and she falls at last.

What, in fact, is more enticing than a promise of marriage between persons of equal rank? The mistress yields to the lover in the hope of being soon his wife. Now, as this way of seducing is always the most lawful excuse for the seduced girl, it is also the most criminal one that the ravisher could use. For the suit is honest in its principle, and the frequentation that it determines seems to have nothing criminal about it, respecting the lawful views with which the seducer decks himself out. The deluded girl imagines that she has to expect every thing from a man, like Sieur Berlhe, who can dispose of himself and offer his hand in exchange for what he requests. This was principally the alluring bait with which Miss Lajon has been caught.

Would Sieur Berlhe pretend that his promises ought to be written? No law authorizes such an idea. The promises, which he made in the circumstances that the indictment mentions, ought to make a greater impression than a simple promise in writ-

ing. The latter may be the effect of the interested importunities of a girl, who requires it as a reward for her favous, or the terms of her fall. One may write such promises in those fits of agitation and madness, when passion can refuse nothing to come to the main point; whereas those that are made in presence of witnesses are the mere performance of a deliberate free will. Sieur Berlhe's are of the latter nature; the evidences say *that he promised Mdlle Lajon several times, that he would never have any wife but her.*

It is true he denies his promises to-day. But, besides that they are proved by the charges, will any body presume that he speaks the truth, and is faithful in his statement? What sort of sincerity and fidelity may we expect from a ravisher, who slighted assurances, oaths and all that honest people respect most? From a man who trifles both with his mistress's honor, and the word he pledged her so often to marry her. From a man who is guilty to the girl he has seduced by his false oaths; to God whose majesty he has despised, by wrongfully taking his name to witness; and to men, by

breaking the firmest ties of human society, sincerity and honesty?

*"I made no promises,"* he says but it follows from the inquiry and his own answer that he has *expressly agreed to his having kept company with Mdlle Lajon these three years, or thereabouts, and having constantly had carnal dealings with her.* Now, when this carnal connection is proved, and owned by the culprit, the promises of marriage are deemed proved; for, it can not be presumed that a girl, like Mdlle Lajon, gave herself up to Sieur Berlhe out of mere voluptuousness and from a certain disposition of temper. Had he not deflowered her and corrupted her innocence she would never have ceased to be virtuous.

The third condition of seduction exists when there is rape of the person, or at least when, pursuant to the insinuations of her seducer, the seduced girl forsakes her parents' house, in order to place herself entirely at his mercy.

Now, Sieur Berlhe used rape with regard to Miss Lajon. The indictment proves that he has agreed to his *having torn her from her brother's hands, at Avignon..* He owned in his interrogatory, that, *being arrived at*

*Beaucaire, he confined her in a room, in which he kept her two months and a half.*

It would be needless to oppose that the abducted girl favoured her own rape, and that, consequently, the punishment for it should be mitigated.

The law has foreseen this shift and condemned it. For, the law, on recognizing that the ravisher holds the will of the girl he has seduced in a state of traldom, has imputed to him all the unfortunate creature's outward consents and seeming voluntary acts. It has looked upon the girl's will as the first product of subordination, a corrupted will.

"We wish ravishers to be punished," says the law, "whether girls have or have not consented to the rape; for," it adds, "it is to be borne in mind that the ravisher's seduction has swayed the will of the seduced girl."<sup>1)</sup>

A celebrated jurist remarks that the penalty of this law exists although the girl consents to being carried off, whether she consents to it in the beginning or afterwards.<sup>2)</sup>

"The punishment for rape," says another jurist, "exists although the girl assented to

<sup>1)</sup> *Leg. unic. cod. de rapt. virg.*

<sup>2)</sup> *Jul. Clar.*

her ravisher's design, and this ought to be a thing of course," he goes on to say, "when, by dint of promises, the ravisher persuades the girl to leave her parents' house to go with him; because it is an act of violence, to behave in this manner."<sup>8)</sup>

Sieur Berlhe's seduction proved so effectual on Mdle Lajon, that it obliged her to go with him, on disguising her sex, to Beaucaire and then to several other towns. Is not this a true rape? What other definition do jurists give it, when they say that that man is guilty of rape, who leads the ravished girl about from place to place, for the purpose of abusing the power he pretended to acquire over her, and of satisfying his own lubricity?

What remains now, is to ask Sieur Berlhe: what motive was it that urged him to pick Mdlle Lajon from her brother's hands and take her to Beaucaire? What was his design in dressing her in boy's clothes? What was his aim *in keeping her two months and a half in a room at Beaucaire?* for he admits this fact. Was it to study Nature, or merely to make her produce? The girl's pregnancy,

8) Pyrrhus Corrad.

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one of the first results of that cloistering, but too clearly showed that Sieur Berlhe preferred voluptuousness to physics, and the title of father to that of mere naturalist.

Yet, though there was not an effective rape as to Mdlle Lajon, but only rape of seduction, it is not less punishable, since no difference is to be made between those two rapes.

In fact, the laws have established the pain of death not only against ravishers, but also against those who seduce by words and corrupters of virtue. They have come to the conclusion, that it is unimportant whether one should use force or persuasion: because the rape of seduction is still more dangerous than that of violence, in so far as it causes the greatest disorders in families, by raising children against their parents. It is, therefore, more severely punished. The Greek legislators, being convinced that persuasive words have a coercive power, used to inflict a severer punishment on the man who seduced the sex by words, than on him who employed open violence.

A celebrated doctor,<sup>1)</sup> writing on this ques-

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1) Isidore of Pelusium.

tion, expresses himself in the following terms: "You let yourselves be won over unreasonably to the common belief, viz., that the man who takes a girl by force, is more guilty than he, who drives her to crime by persuasive words. As for me," he says, "after having duly considered the nature of the case, I do believe that he, who seduces a girl by force itself, and because he, who takes the body by violence, leaves, at least, the mind pure and unaltered; whereas the former corrupts the mind, and then the body; he is therefore twice as guilty."

As this belief seems to be the most reasonable, it has been followed by the ordinances of our kings. These have expressly subjected the crime of seduction or subordination to the pain of death; because they concluded that he, who corrupts the mind and heart by persuasive discourses to gain his point, exercises a kind of tyranny for which he ought to be punished more severely than if he had made himself to be obeyed by force. In fact, he diffuses a quick poison into the heart, a poison more dangerous than death itself. The more skill he has in instilling it, the more guilty he is. The

speedy issue of his enterprise is a proof of his malice.

Can any match be found for Sieur Berlhe in this line? He vanquished Mdlle Lajon by artifice and suppleness; but his victory made him cruel. Not satisfied with having enslaved this young girl's heart, he also wished to put her body in irons, and thus set up in every way for a tyrannical master, by treating her more cruelly than if she was a slave.

Now, what instances of a greater sway and barbarity could there be, than to wrap a young lady in chains? To put her body in slavery? To confine her in a prison which she continually carries with her everywhere? To secure it with a *padlock* whose structure might be left to the care of the most jealous Florentin to imitate?

A kind of drawers, hemmed and worked like the meshes of a net with several brass wires woven into each other, forms a girdle that comes round and fastens in front with a padlock of which Sieur Berlhe has the key. This contour, which forms the enclosure of the prison of which he is the gaoler, has several seams which are sealed with brands of red sealing-wax, set from distance to dis-

tance. Sieur Berlhe holds the seal with which he makes these brands, and, indeed, the engraving on it is most singular and imitable. But there is nothing surprising in this: a porter usually takes his precautions, and wishes to be sure of his gates and locks.

The whole of this apparatus is so framed, that there is barely quite a narrow space left open, and this is bristling all round with sharp spikes which make it inaccessible. Sieur Berlhe would fain have been able to close this up too, but the needs of nature were opposed to his doing so. And yet this passage, notwithstanding its narrowness, is trimmed with several impressions, which, while corresponding in a circular manner to one another, are like so many sentries watching for the safety of the place, or like so many eunuchs that are guarding the door of pleasures, and keeping the abode of delights night and day under lock and key.

Is such mechanism the contrivance of a new beginner? Must he not, on the contrary, have fed a long time on the taste of carnal pleasure and be acquainted with all its circumstances, in order to bring out such inventions and make reserves for himself in this way?

When Sieur Berlhe was questioned on this point in his interrogatory: *Whether he set a Girdle in the English fashion<sup>1)</sup> with a pad-lock of which he has the key, on Mdlle Lajon, in order to go on debauching her and prevent her from having connection with other men; whether there were several seals on this girdle, made with red wax and a seal which he carries about him an wdhich he used to compare whenever he went to see this girl; whether he took this girdle off her at the time of her delivery, and put it back on her afterwards:*

He replied: *That he had never seen this girdle; but that, indeed, Mdlle Lajon had told him she had made one, and put it on herself.*

Were the matter to stand as Sieur Berlhe

<sup>1)</sup> The Magistrate wronged the English, by calling this girdle, a *girdle in the English style*. No people are less given to jealousy. These islanders, who try to imitate the ancient Romans in every thing, care just as little, as they did, for their wives' infidelity. They imitate Lucullus, Pompey, Antony and Cato, who had gallant wives, whose conduct they were not ignorant of, and yet they did not trouble their heads about it. They leave with Lepidus alone the paltry glory of dying with vexation for it. When returning home, they send word before them to their wives; this preliminary is less a proof of their politeness than of their indifference respecting jealousy. It is then more proper to call those girdles, *girdles in the Bergamask fashion*, as Rabelais has done in tome 3, book 3 ch. 35.

asserts, it goes to show that he is exceedingly given to jealousy, and that Mdlle Lajon, desirous of freeing him from his suspicions, set herself on a kind of rack. This proceeding becomes, therefore, a proof of both of Sieur Berlhe's jealousy and of Mdlle Lajon's attachment for him. But this false allegation of Sieur Berlhe is overthrown by what results from the indictment: *Mdlle Lajon wore a girdle of brass-wire trimmed in front, where there was an iron-padlock, which had been attached to her by Sieur Berlhe, who kept the key of it as well as the seal, the impression of which seemed to be made in sealing-wax on several parts of this girdle. The said seal was indeed frequently seen in Sieur Berlhe's hands; and he stated that, though Mdlle Lajon remained at Nimes and he at Beaucaire, he was sure of her fidelity, and that she certainly could not hold any frequentations with another man, because he had provided against the like.*

How dares Sieur Berlhe be so bold then as to say he has never seen this girdle, whilst it is the work of his jealousy? How can he assert that Mdlle Lajon put it on herself, whilst he fixed it on himself, and

avowed that, owing to his foresight, *he had himself taken this precaution?*

On this account, he did not wish to give up the seal or key, which he has even still in his possession. Therefore Mdlle Lajon has been obliged to petition you to bind Sieur Berlhe by your first command to deliver both to the clerk's office, and to have this padlock opened and the girdle taken off by two officially appointed and duly sworn midwives, who will draw up a report on them, to be joined to the charges.

This petition produced no effect on Sieur Berlhe, though he had notice of it. He was satisfied with stating in his defence, that Mdlle Lajon *wishes to have* this girdle, and he thinks this shift doubtlessly dispenses him from delivering those objects. We shall copy his own words: *Let nobody, says he, make a display of a certain girdle. for, besides that Mdlle Lajon wishes to have it, by way of a joke, she can not increase her pretended damages for that, as it can have done her no wrong.*

Now, let us explain this verb: *to wish to have.*

In the first place, *to wish to have*, means to desire something from another, as people

do not want to wish for a thing they have already themselves. The girdle of which there is question was then in the hands of Sieur Berlhe, when, according to his own words, Mdlle Lajon *wished to have* it. He was therefore imposing on you when he stated in his Interrogatory, that *he never saw this girdle.*

In the second place, *to which to have*, means to wilfully lay claim to, even to accept with a certain pleasure what is given to us; so that *to wish to have* a girdle signifies to quietly allow it to be put on, to receive it without murmuring, to consent to it with a kind of complaisance. But is not this same will, this resignation, or, more properly speaking, this submission to so wild a fancy, the very effect and consequence of seduction? .

When a girl becomes the victim and slave of a lewd man, are her thoughts free while her mind is thus restrained? Has she liberty to act of herself, whilst, owing to the effect of seduction, she looks upon, she minds no law but the one which caprice dictates to her master, and whilst, in a word, she lets herself be guided by her tyrant's will?

Is it not then quite easy to know exactly whose will it was that directed this measure? Nobody will presume it was Mdlle Lajon's. On one hand, her virtue did not require any precautions of this kind; on the other hand, she was contented with the choice which destiny had procured for her and which Sieur Berlhe had determined. She thought of nothing but of him who had her first flowers. So that, even though one should presume that she *wished for* this girdle, that she let it be put on her without sorrow or regret, it is a sensible proof that she would have considered with the same indifference whether she had this girdle, or not, as, indeed, her wisdom has never depended on bolts or padlocks.

So when this measure is attributed to Mdlle Lajon, it then becomes indifferent in itself; whereas it is far more reasonable to suppose that it was the product of some specious motive. Now, the proceedings prove that this motive was nothing else but foresight, precaution, or, more properly speaking, the jealousy of Sieur Berlhe; as he assured people, *that Mdlle Lajon certainly could not hold any frequentations with an-*

*other man, because he himself had taken his precautions.*

Those are precautions in the Italian way; nor will it be out of place to state here, that they are the invention of Francesco Carrara, imperial Viguier of Padua.<sup>1)</sup> We learn from history that this seignior was remarkable for his cruelties. To add to his other crimes, he was barbarous enough to padlock his mistresses. There is a dressing-chest still preserved at Venice, in the palace of San Marco, containing several of those *girdles*<sup>1)</sup> and *padlocks*. They were produced in the action taken against this monster as so many proofs of his guilt.

This fashion did not take at first. As Carrara was strangled at Padua by a decree from the Senate of Venice, in the year 1405<sup>2)</sup>, the jealous people of that time admire the invention, but they did not dare use a precaution which had cost its author so dear. However, they subsequently introduced it among them by slow degrees. Soon the number of the guilty made them so unpunished; and, at last, things came to such

1) Misson, *Voyage d'Italie*, tome I, u. 217.

1) *Ibi sunt serae et varia repagula, quibus turpe illud monstrum pellices suas occludebat.* Misson, *ibid.*

2) Misson, *Voyage d'Italie*.

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a pitch that, according to the celebrated Voltaire:

Since that time, in Venice and in Rome  
There is no pedant, cit, or gentleman  
But, to guard the virtue of his house,  
Lays up a stock of girdles and padlocks.  
There, every jealous man, without fear of blame,  
Holds under lock and key the virtue of his dame.

We find in recently written Memoirs<sup>3)</sup> the following description of one of those modern padlocks: "It is a kind of coat of mail shaped somewhat like the bottom of a sling, which makes the passage impenetrable. A quantity of little chains fasten this wire-work to a girdle, which diversely tied ribands render almost unshaken."

We read in Brantôme<sup>1)</sup> that this precaution, which the Italians thought fit to take with their wives, was near being introduced into France, in the reign of Henry II. An Italian dealer took it into his head to spread out a dozen of these *iron-girdles* at the Saint-Germain fair, with the intention of introducing this fashion among the French; but he was immediately threatened with being thrown into the Seine if he carried on that trade, and this obliged him to lock up his goods and fly. "And ever since," says an

3) *Mém. du Comte de Bonneval*, tome I, page 74.

1) Brant., tome II, disc. 1, p. 176.

author,<sup>2)</sup> "nobody in France has thought of getting these padlocks made, or of sending to Italy for them."

It then lay in store for Sieur Berlhe to make the second attempt at introducing those padlocks into France. The same motive, that induces the Italians to padlock their wives, suggested to him the idea of having recourse to one of those cumbersome girdles for Mdlle Lajon.

Such is the fatal effect of jealousy. This passion, which tortures the lover as much as the beloved object, is good only for hastening, most times, the evil one dreads. But let us see of what nature that jealousy of Sieur Berlhe is.

The Italians are jealous by nature. Now, Sieur Berlhe is from Avignon, almost an Italian town, where *Italianism* somehow reigns. It is not surprising then that this jealous temper should be found in him, and that he should really be as jealous as an Italian.

The Spaniards are jealous from a feeling of vanity and self-love, which constitutes the chief character of that nation. Now,

2) Rabelais, tome III, liv. 3, ch. 35.

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Sieur Berlhe minded but his self-love, when he padlocked Mdlle Lajon; because, in fact, there is no passion in which the love of one's self reigns so mightily as in love. People are, therefore, more inclined to sacrifice the peace of the beloved one, than to lose their own. We may then rightly conclude that Sieur Berlhe is as jealous as any man can be in Italy or Spain, and that it is the spirit of these two nations, which inspired him with the structure and use of this padlock.

Now, if Miss Lajon yielded to this seducer's artifices and listened to the lessons of love which he insinuated into her unexperienced heart, did he think she would yield to others? Ought not this young girl's virtue, which he found so hard to seduce, to be secure from those wild suspicions? Can not man be then jealous, without the woman's being unfaithful to him? Will an idle suspicion be a proof of the reality? Can the virtue of the sex be preserved only in a seraglio, or in the keeping of eunuchs and bolts?

Frenchwomen have enjoyed their liberty till now. They have enjoyed that natural faculty, which is so amiable, so precious, and which leaves them free to act

and decide for themselves. Shall people try to take it away from them to-day, in order to plunge them into slavery? Thus, they are all concerned, you see, in Mdlle Lajon's cause. If Frenchmen were formerly seen to stoutly resist the introduction of a tyrannical tribunal,<sup>1)</sup> got up beyond the mountains, Frenchwomen are equally interested to-day to battle hard against the Padlock-fashion; for, it comes from the same direction, bearing with it the same marks of slavery and tyranny.

They are but right to be jealous of their liberty. Nature has been pleased to favour them with this treasure; can they be blamed for seeking to preserve it? Shall they, who were born free, become slaves in consequences of love or by force of jealousy? Their virtue is more meritorious when they are at liberty to pursue good or evil. Shall this virtue be made to depend henceforth upon the force and necessity they will be in of being virtuous? Does not liberty make the merit of every action? What will become of them if they are deprived of it? Bodies have their duties as well as minds;

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<sup>1)</sup> **The inquisition.**

virtue ought to direct them; reserve and modesty ought to form their character. It is not to be feared that, owing to the vicious propensity of nature, they might be more inclined to the things which they are forbidden?

The Italians and Spaniards make it their sole business to secure the possession of the beloved one, nor do they trouble their heads about her affection. Hence the pleasure that arises from this constraint is neither brisk nor piquant. Love often delight in frustrating their precautions; and a comic author was right in addressing them the following lines:

O you who, with a jealous mind,  
Under lock and key hold a spouse,  
In spite of all your bolts and your padlocks,  
Cupid, when he takes his measures,  
Will have the key of your bolts:  
This oracle is more trusty than Calchas's.

The French, on the contrary, seek to flatter the fair, and win them by gentleness. They try hard to owe the love of their wives to their own personal merit; and it is the delicacy of this feeling that seasons their pleasures.

This does not mean that there can not be jealous people every where. In Boniface

we see the follies of a Provençal<sup>1)</sup> whose jealousy breathed nothing but fury and madness. We may, however, generally say that France is a fortunate country, in which people have at all times breathed an air of that would be agitated and tormented with honest liberty; a country in which women's virtue is not imprisoned; a country in which they are allowed on the contrary a certain licence, that, while choosing themselves what is good, they may also by themselves display their honesty and merit. So that Sieur Berlhe can not be sufficiently punished for having brought the pattern of those fatal girdles among us.

What displeasure would it not be for our fair sex, had this fashion been introduced on their account? How would they accustom themselves to this restraint? What despair for them to see complaisant men, like the ones they have had till now, changed into restless, surly, jealous fellows? fellows that would be agitated and tormented with such vain apprehensions as make the purest virtue suspected; fellows who would watch all their steps and proceedings. Those

<sup>1)</sup> Boniface, tome Ier, livre 5, tit. 8, ch. 3.

jealous minds would scrupulously weigh the words, accurately sift the slightest expressions, scrutinize the looks, even search into the breathings of the heart. Those strict censors those incorruptible overseers would look upon the shadow of evil as a downright certainty of crime. In short, those jealous men would, thanks to Sieur Berlhe's fashion, introduce new expedients in the shape of bolts, gratings and padlocks.

In this manner the Italian and Spanish women let themselves be gradually subjugated by a restraint which does nothing but irritate their violent desires. Owing to the force of the restraint, they are in the fury of a revolted passion. Most of them are indebted only to bolts for their good behaviour. The padlocks, which are the nearest vouchers for their fidelity, secure, it is true, those women's virtue. If the restrain, which unruly suspicions have imposed on them, keep them from making their husbands what the latter dread to be, it is not their fault.

In fact, the more a man affects to deprive a woman of liberty, the more excited she becomes to take the leap; the more she

thinks about losing a thing of the loss of which she had got so high an idea by the very captivity in which he holds her. So we may say that this restraint is the stumbling block of the generality of those women. Ought we really to expect meritorious behaviour from force and restraint? If we have so much esteem for purity, it is only for that which is free and voluntary; because if it is the result of restraint, it is then false virtue.

It is therefore more proper to curb the sex, not with padlocks or material chains, but with those of honor, by inspiring it with the true sense of honor. Mistrustful care does not form women's virtue; honor alone can keep them to their good behaviour.

Besides, how can we resolve to make the persons we love unhappy? Do people try to please, when they compel the object of their love to live thus in restraint? "A lover," says Plato, "is a friend inspired by the Gods." But, is not a lover like Sieur Berlhe inspired by demons? Does this manner of padlocking the object of one's fondness mean love? Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld is quite right, when he says, that natural ferocity makes fewer cruel persons

than self-love; and that if we judge of love by the great bulk of its consequences, it looks more like hatred than friendship.

From what source does such derangement flow into the minds of this class of lovers? "It proceeds," says the Roman orator, "from the dread they are in lest any body else should enjoy the same object." It arises from the suspicion they entertain of being paid in the same coin with which they often pay other people. They are changeable, and they suppose the same change exists in others. So, to obviate the consequences of this inconstancy, they have recourse to padlocks, without ceasing for all that to be inconstant and fickle themselves.

Such has been the exact conduct of Sieur Berlhe with respect to Mdlle Lajon. The various circumstances, which I have been relating, characterize his crime, and they ought to determine the punishment he deserves. He is guilty at once of rape and seduction, but of a seduction which has had singular consequences. It is fit then to examine the penalties that attend them.

The ravisher was condemned by the law, which was given to the people of God, to

marry the ravished girl, whether she was rich or poor.

The laws of Lycurgus and Solon left the girl her choice between the death and the marriage of her ravisher. The Athenians acted in the same manner.

The Romans, those master of the world, used to condemn the ravisher to death, and they would not even allow him to marry the ravished girl to escape this death.

The ordinances of the Kingdom are not less severe. That of Orléans commands ravishers to be sued at law, without paying regard to the letters of pardon they may obtain. That of Blois "requires that those who may have debauched a girl under age of twenty-five years old, under promise of marriage or other pretence, without the assent, knowledge, will and express consent of fathers, mothers and guardians, should be punished with death without hope of pardon; notwithstanding any consent that the girl may have given before, at the time of, or after the rape."

The disposition of these laws was renewed by subsequent ordinances. The verdicts of the Supreme Courts, which conformed to the general law of the kingdom

as far as it punished the ravisher with death, are to be had in every compiler of Decrees.

The object of this punishment is to allow fathers and mothers to continue their authority over their children and hinder them from deviating from their duty. Rape is a crime quite opposed to public honesty and to the peace of families, which it concerns so essentially that children should not be led, by a crime so hurtful to civil society, into mismatched and almost always dishonourable marriages.

But God forbid, Gentlemen, Mdlle Lajon should urge the pain of death passed on ravishers against her lover! Let him live, but that it may be to make amends for her honor; let him live, but that it may be to put a stop to her tears. It is then the part of justice to pass a sentence on him, as being guilty towards her, for such considerable damages as will impose upon him the salutary constraint of fulfilling his engagements.

He himself agrees to *having kept company with Mdlle Lajon for about three years; he does not deny that he is the author of her pregnancy.* Is there a better proof than the one that comes from the prisoner's

own confession? In short, it is proper that he should be sentenced to pay damages.

Now the circumstances ought to settle these damages; and you ought, Gentlemen, to grant such ones as the young lady, whom I am defending, has sued for in her petition. First I showed that she is worthy of the protection of the laws; that a promise of marriage was the principal cause of her fall. This object was not above her hopes, there being no disproportion in the age of the parties. Their fortunes are the same; their conditions are alike; and, if we go back to their parents and ancestors, we find them all on the same level.

Damages are due in proportion to the wrong one does to any body and to the injury he suffers from it. Now what greater injury can one do to a young girl than to rob her of her honor? What has she left when she has lost her virginity? Her virginity is a priceless treasure, as it is indeed the most lasting glory, and the most essential portion of a Christian girl.

In fact, virginity procures for a girl what she must receive only in the next world. It becomes virginity alone to symbolize and closely represent on this earth, which is but

a place of mortality, the immortal life. In short, virginity is the first of the states of life; it is the ornament of morals, the holiness of the sex, and a beautiful flower that should be dearly and preciously preserved.

Mdlle Lajon has lost this flower through Sieur Berlhe's artifices; this flower which is nothing else but the life of honor, a life infinitely more precious than that of nature. Had Sieur Berlhe taken away this girl's life, what would she have lost but what she is to lose one day quite naturally by the law common to all mortals? But when he ravished her, he took away from her what death itself could not have wrested from her. She exists indeed, but she is as if she were dead. She is a girl, but she is no more a virgin. She has lost what she had most dear to her, and this loss is of such a nature, that it can not be received.

The Scriptures say that the Virgin of Israël is fallen, and there is nobody that can raise her up again. Saint Jerome, writing on this subject, makes no scruple of saying that, although God is omnipotent, yet he can not restore a girl's virginity once she has lost it, or decorate her with the flower which was snatched from her.

Infamy is one consequence of this loss, owing to the shame that men have attached specially to the weakness of the sex. So, when a girl is unfortunate enough to have lost her virginity, it is all over with her; there she is dishonored; nobody looks at her any longer but with disdain and contempt.

Gentlemen, is there any indemnity proportionate to such a loss? The damages, that are granted to a disgraced girl, serve somehow only to reveal her fault to the whole universe; because her unfortunate adventure is announced in a tribunal whose sentences are passed but to be published. Therefore, only the fulfilment of the seducer's promises can, according to men's judgment, efface such a stain; and on this very account, the damages ought to be very considerable, in order to oblige Sieur Berlhe to marry Mdlle Lajon.

The quality of the parties, their birth, their fortune, the merit of Mdlle Lajon, the very conduct of her lover, all should induce him to this settlement.

But this is a ravisher of quite a new cast. He owns the courtship and frequentations; he does not deny he is the author of his mis-

tress's pregnancy; and yet he will not fulfil his promises.

He is guilty, since the seduction and rape are proved, nor does he blush. He is troubled more than ever by the stings of his conscience, and yet what a show of safety about him!

In short, he breaks his oaths; he trespasses against the laws; he makes a young girl wretched, and all that is but jesting in this ravisher's mind. He jested when he was seducing, and he seduced but for jesting. Let us apply to him then that passage of Scripture in which the Sage, speaking of the silly excuse of him who betrays the laws of friendship, makes him say, when he is convinced, that *his knavery is only a joke*.

But since when do people look upon the severe disposition of the laws as jesting? Since when do they treat the confusion that a ravisher spreads among civil society as a joke; the disgrace he brings upon a family; the sad condition to which he reduces a young girl whom he has dishonored, even before her age permitted her to appear in the world?

Several various interests turn up in this cause. That of the honest liberty of

women, attacked in the person of Mdlle Lajon. That of the public of which the seduced girl is a member. That of her parents, towards whom Sieur Berlhe has become guilty by carrying off this girl. In short, that of the plaintiff who has been deceived and dishonored forever. She spends her days in sorrow and sadness since her fall. Painful thoughts incessantly beset her with all their horrors since Sieur Berlhe affects to have wholly forgotten her; and her lover's infidelity has given her such grief that her health, youth and beauty are wearing fast away.

She is, Gentlemen, truly worthy of pity and commiseration; yet she remains continually plunged in this state of humiliation. People bestow pity upon her, perhaps even praises, but all this does not alter the situation. Nothing can change this unfortunate girl's sad lot while the base fellow will not remember his former oaths, and while he refuses to fulfill his engagements: so that all things invite and conspire, Gentlemen, to determine you to strike the insensible fellow's heart with the thunder of a severe sentence, in order to bring him back to his duty.

THE END







